



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Kosovo, in response to the Address by SRSG Holkeri

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 11, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Harri Holkeri, to the Permanent Council for the first time today. The United States fully supports the efforts of Special Representative Holkeri and the staff of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. We are also pleased to see the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Pascal Fieschi at the head table today, as well.

Mr. Chairman, the United States continues to support "standards before status" as the best way to prepare Kosovo for its future. The United States remains committed to Kosovo's multi-ethnic development and will continue to work to implement UNSCR 1244 together with the UN, the OSCE, and others in the international community.

To that end, we also welcome the Standards for Kosovo that were presented yesterday in Pristina. These eight internationally-endorsed standards are fundamental to any democratic society, and we believe that they will help solidify multi-ethnic democracy and stability in Kosovo.

The next step in our view in this process will be an evaluation of Kosovo's progress in implementing these standards in mid-2005, or earlier if sufficient progress is made. This evaluation would be completed by the Contact Group, the United Nations Security Council, and other interested parties. If these standards should be met by then, we would be prepared to begin a process to determine Kosovo's future status. If, however, the standards should not be met, we would continue to reevaluate the implementation of the standards at periodic intervals.

The United States offers its full support to UNMIK as it continues to work to operationalize these standards and we look forward to receiving UNMIK's implementation plan for the Standards for Kosovo in the near future.

Mr. Chairman, in our view as well, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo is playing a vital role, as part of UNMIK, to develop multiethnic, democratic institutions in Kosovo. We share the Special Representative's positive assessment of UNMIK's work and we believe the Mission should continue its efforts, with sufficient staffing and resources to fulfill its mandate. This Mission has our full support.

We commend Special Representative Holkeri for opening the dialogue between Pristina

and Belgrade in Vienna this past October. We urge both sides to engage constructively in the upcoming technical working group meetings. This dialogue is an important step toward establishing constructive links between Belgrade and Pristina and it is one of the standards that must be met before status can be discussed.

Although noticeable progress has been made in bringing about stability and security in Kosovo, the United States remains concerned about the security situation in Kosovo. While there has been some improvement in the areas of returns and freedom of movement, violent attacks threaten to undermine this progress. We strongly condemn the December 6 incident in North Mitrovica. These actions are contrary to the interests of many within Kosovo and we call upon all leaders to condemn and work to prevent such acts of violence.

Providing real opportunities for safe and sustainable returns, together with support for the integration of vulnerable returnee populations, is an essential element of regional stability, post-conflict reform, and integration into Europe. We also remain concerned that minority populations are still marginalized and face difficulties reintegrating fully into mainstream society.

Further instability will also hinder Kosovo's economic development, which is still in its infancy and thus in a fragile state. We share the SRSG's concern regarding the high rate of unemployment in Kosovo and support the resumption of privatization of Kosovo's socially-owned enterprises as soon as possible.

The future of Kosovo very much depends on the will of the Kosovar people - the will to create sustainable, democratic institutions, the will to quell extremism and eradicate violence, and the will to create a peaceful, multiethnic society. The United States stands ready, alongside our partners in the international community, to assist the people of Kosovo in making this future a reality.

We wish Special Representative Holkeri the best of success during his term in Kosovo, and we reiterate our pledge of full support to the SRSG and the staff of UNMIK and OMIK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.